Washington State Department of Transportation
Public Transportation and Rail Division
Office of Transit Mobility

Grant Technical Work Group Meeting
WSDOT Urban Planning Office
Minutes

August 16, 2005
9:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Attendees
Brad Windler (Ben Franklin Transit); Charlie Shell (City of Seattle); Jeanette Johnson (Community Transit); Karen Richter (PSRC); Lisa Wolterink (Sound Transit); Mike Harbour (Intercity Transit); Patricia Levine (Pierce Transit); Peter Heffernan (King County Metro); Dale Robins (SWRTC); Stephanie Tax, Cathy Silins, Theresa Smith (WSDOT).

Discussion: General
A committee member suggested that a 1-2 sentence project description might be too restrictive. The group agreed to allow 2-3 sentences.

Transportation plan inclusion
Committee members discussed the importance for project proposals to be in local and regional transportation plans. Concern was expressed that some projects might not be in the plans because they are too small or haven't had sufficient time to be added to the plans. It was agreed that the goal was for a project to demonstrate consistency with the plans. Applicants don't need to provide the whole plan, just the relevant portions.

Threshold criteria
Committee members discussed the way the threshold criteria should be considered. Consensus was that the threshold criteria should not be scored high, medium, or low because it is the minimum qualifications needed to be considered for a grant. Project proposals will need to be ranked high, medium, or low, with a list of "unranked" proposals that did not meet the minimum threshold criteria.

Land use map
Committee members still questioned the need for a land use map in the application packet. Consensus was that if WSDOT staff wanted the land use map it could be requested but that it should be made clear in the application information what the land use map should contain and why it was needed.

Grant application questions
A committee member suggested that if essay responses are desired rather than individual answers to specific questions the question numbers could be changed to bullets to encourage essay responses, rather than numbered answers.

A committee member posed the question of whether operational costs were equivalent to maintenance costs.

For the financial information question add language asking for funds to be identified as "secured" or "unsecured" and to clearly what is meant by "available" to avoid speculative projects.

Discussion: Draft Framework for Scoring
Committee members expressed the importance of having the criteria line up with the application questions.

Another member suggested that implementation should be scored higher?

There was a question of how others programs have scored their grant proposals? Cathy Silins (WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division) explained the concept of "forced pairs" in which grant applications are matched against each other, over and over again. However the group was reminded that this is a very labor intensive process, requiring that applications be read multiple times. Stephanie Tax (WSDOT Highways and Local Programs) described the process used for Safe Routes to Schools grants, in which applications were ranked high, medium or low through committee discussions. This process works best with similar applications. However, it is also a labor intensive process, and won't work for large numbers of applications. The Regional Mobility Grant Program proposals are likely to be very different from one another and there is the potential for a significant number of applications.

1) Committee members discussed at great length the concern of people scoring projects from their own agency and the need for transparency in this process. The scoring process needs to clear to everyone. A committee member suggested that members could work together in teams evaluating specific criteria to ensure consistency. Concern was expressed that WSDOT should not be seen as the exclusive evaluator of proposals to maintain the public's trust in this process.

Wrap - up
The Grant Technical Work Group requests direction and leadership from the Advisory Committee on the scoring of applications, since a consensus was not reached on the numbers that should be assigned to each criterion and whether the threshold criteria should be assigned a number at all.

It was decided the process could be similar to:

1) Theresa receives applications and forwards to the Grant Technical Work Group.
2) All members score each application with the exception of any submitted by their own agency.
3) Send scores to Theresa.
4) Theresa (and staff) will review scores and determine if the scoring indicates an obvious high, medium and low ranking.
5) The GTWG will gather to discuss rankings and refine the scores.
6) Rankings will be forwarded to the Advisory Committee.
7) Advisory Committee will finalize rankings and prepare a list to forward to the Legislature.

The meeting concluded at 12:45 p.m.

The next meeting will be the joint meeting of the Grant Technical Work Group and the Advisory Committee which will occur Friday September 2nd from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at a NEW LOCATION the King County Department of Transportation building at 201 S Jackson St in the 8th floor conference room (across the street from where we usually meet).